



Communiqué

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Free trade agreement between U.S. and Morocco is a possibility, says Assistant Secretary of Commerce

A free trade agreement between Morocco and the United States is a real possibility, according to Assistant Secretary of Commerce Maria Cino. She was speaking at an AmCham lunch-debate held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Casablanca, on February 18.

Ms. Cino said it was vital that the two countries work toward a free trade agreement, as an increasing number of U.S. firms were looking to export in response to a saturated domestic market. Those companies were looking for joint ventures and partnerships, and that would create jobs.

"Exports are responsible for 12 million jobs in the United States, and those jobs pay up to 18% more than the national average," Ms. Cino said.

The idea of a free trade agreement was first raised publicly during a visit to Morocco by U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick in late January. Mr. Zoellick said that such an accord was under consideration to increase trade and investment and to support Morocco's economic reforms, but he stressed that no decision had been made and that discussions were at an early stage.

Ms. Cino congratulated Morocco on its selection by the U.S. Trade and Development Agency as Country of the Year for 2001, and said that her visit to Morocco was part of a lengthy mission including Botswana and South Africa that aimed to strengthen relationships between U.S. and foreign businesses. She announced that her visit would be followed by a trade mission in June and a possible visit by Secretary of Commerce Donald Evans before the end of the year.

Citing a New Jersey-based consortium

that recently won a hotly-contested controlled landfill tender in Fès, and a \$34 million canning plant to be built in Agadir with innovative U.S. equipment, Ms. Cino said that a foundation was already being built for many future successes.

Maria Cino was appointed Assistant Secretary of Commerce in May 2001 after a 20 year career in the management of public policy and political projects. She has served as a Deputy Chairman of the Republican National Committee, as National Political Director for the Bush for President campaign, and as a public policy consultant for a Washington, D.C. law firm.



Assistant Secretary of Commerce Maria Cino addresses an AmCham lunch-debate on February 18

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Mar 13: AmCham workshop: The Fiscal Implications of the 2002 budget (in French)

Mar 20: AmidEast/AmCham workshop on Results-Oriented Negotiation (037 67 50 81)

Mar 21,22: The Maghreb Unbound: Opportunities and Constraints of Private Investment, Barcelona (call 022 36 95 15)

Apr 3: AmidEast/AmCham workshop: How To Grow Human Capital (037 67 50 81)

Apr 6-9: Pêche-Expo 2002, Larache (call 039 52 00 40)

Apr 20: Fulbright (MACECE) Gala Dinner (call 037 76 41 09)

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An English-language program with a unique emphasis on professional development

Courses begin March 14. Candidates should have at least five years of progressive managerial responsibility and strong potential for senior leadership positions in their current organizations. For further information: www.emba.ma

Maghreb AmChams to push for greater regional economic integration through trade events, political lobbying



From left to right: Kathy Kriger (Foreign Commercial Service, U.S. Consulate, Casablanca), Kamal Driss (AmCham Algeria President), Chadli Belarbi (Tunisian-American Chamber of Commerce Executive Director), Eric Stoclet (AmCham Morocco President), and Carl Dawson (AmCham Morocco Executive Director)

The American Chambers of Commerce in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia have approved a four-point action plan to promote trade between the United States and the Maghreb. Representatives of the three Amchams met in Casablanca on February 18 with U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce Maria Cino, U.S. Ambassador to Morocco Margaret Tutwiler, and several regional company representatives.

The three Maghreb AmChams are to write a joint letter to regional Heads of State and U.S. Congressional committee chairpeople to raise issues of concern, seek improved business conditions and the elimination of trade barriers, and request assistance in promoting the U.S./ North Africa Economic Partnership (Eizenstat Initiative).

They will also seek to take advantage of a June U.S. trade mission to Morocco by identifying key regional products and generating interest for a regional trade promotion event. Such an event would lead to success stories that would further encourage trade and investment by U.S. and North African firms.

Other points in the action plan are the organization of media events featuring high-profile guest speakers to promote the USNAEP, and the creation of sectoral committees to review regional (intra-Maghreb) trade issues.

The meeting also heard a report on

the recent creation of AmCham Algeria (featured in the next issue), which received government authorization in July 2001. AmCham Algeria President Kamal Driss said that the initial 35 members included Pfizer, General Electric, BP Amoco and Xerox, and that the membership target for 2002 was 75. The Chamber's first dinner event attracted some high-profile guests, including the Energy Minister and the Presidential Chief-of-Staff, and Board members are now looking at staffing and structural issues.

U.S.A.I.D. (Morocco) Director James Bednar presented the Morocco Investor's Roadmap project, which had identified

three key constraints to investment: access to land, investment approvals and authorizations, and taxation and accounting issues. A pilot project in Agadir had produced user guides and a geographic information system (GIS) to facilitate land access – all in collaboration with regional officials – and regulatory streamlining to accelerate company registration was also under study. Mr. Bednar said the Tunisian Investor's Roadmap project was complete and functioning well, although its Algerian counterpart had been delayed by ongoing legislative reform.



Les Nouveautés Fiscales et leur Impact sur la Clôture des Comptes et sur la Détermination du Résultat Fiscal de l'Exercice 2001

a seminar by Mr. Abdelwaret Kabbaj, Partner, PriceWaterhouseCoopers

Wednesday 13 March, 9am to 12pm followed by lunch,
Hyatt Regency Hotel, Casablanca

Fee: DH 1500 per person for member companies
DH 2000 per person for non-member companies

Fee deadline: March 11 at 12 noon

Contact: Rabia El Alama, Program Manager, on 022 29 30 28

Minister, Ambassador inaugurate rural school improvements funded by AmCham corporate citizenship initiative

A State primary school that was extensively renovated and expanded last year as part of an AmCham corporate citizenship initiative was officially inaugurated on February 19.

AmCham spent DH 650,000 on the construction of four new classrooms at Abdeljalil Ben Hida school, which is located in a rural area on the outskirts of Casablanca, and AmCham member CMS Energy funded the drilling of a well to provide water, a sanitary bloc, and the installation of electricity in partnership with the National Electricity Service (ONE).

Other AmCham members which have supported the school project, either directly or through the annual AmCham-Hyatt Golf Challenge, include Ciments du Maroc, Compaq, Microsoft, 3M, Tube et Profil, and PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

Prior to the construction of the new classrooms, pupils were unable to complete the primary school curriculum due to lack of space and were therefore often unable to continue their education.

The renovated school was inaugurated by National Education Minister Abdellah Saaf and U.S. Ambassador Margaret Tutwiler in the presence of Casablanca Governor Driss Benhima and a host of Moroccan and American officials. Guests at the ceremony then toured the school and observed a class of students hard at work. CMS Energy's Larry Dewitt, who was instrumental in bringing the project to fruition, said later that such initiatives aimed at helping communities to help themselves in achieving long-term goals.

AmCham plans to maintain its commitment to the school and its community this year by coordinating a needs assessment involving parents and staff. AmCham will then assist the community in its efforts to raise funds for the identified needs, thereby both satisfying the immediate priorities and increasing local capacity to do so independently in the future.



Education Minister Abdellah Saaf and U.S. Ambassador Margaret Tutwiler inaugurate the renovated Abdeljalil Ben Hida primary school in Casablanca



U.S. Ambassador Margaret Tutwiler observes a class at Abdeljalil Ben Hida School on the outskirts of Casablanca

Communiqué

ADVERTISING RATES

Quarter Page: DH 2000
Half Page: DH 3000
Full Page: DH 5000

Contact: Rabia El Alama,
Program Manager, on 022 29 30 28

AmCham inaugurates new offices, welcomes new Director

AmCham inaugurated its new offices on the ground floor of the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Casablanca on February 18, with a ribbon cutting ceremony featuring U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce Maria Cino, Ambassador Margaret Tutwiler, and AmCham President Eric Stoclet. The new offices, which are located to the right of the main hotel entrance, are much more spacious than the previous location near the reception desk.

AmCham has also welcomed its new Executive Director, Carl Dawson, who started work on January 28. Carl has been in Morocco for seven years and was previously Economic and Political Analyst with Upline International, a Moroccan investment bank, and Special Projects Coordinator for the Fulbright Commission (MACECE) in Rabat.

Carl holds a Masters degree in Communication from Cornell University, and is a doctoral candidate at the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. His thesis topic deals with the free trade agreement between Morocco and the European Union. Previous Executive Director Simon O'Rourke is now living in New York City.



Eric Stoclet proudly displays the AmCham banner to Ambassador Tutwiler and AmCham staff members Aicha Mohdad and Rabia El Alama



Assistant Secretary of Commerce Maria Cino inaugurates the new AmCham offices with AmCham President Eric Stoclet and Ambassador Tutwiler



New AmCham Executive Director Carl Dawson (center) chats with Tunisian-American Chamber of Commerce Director Chadli Belarbi (left) and Kamel Achab of the U.S. Embassy in Algeria

COMPANY NEWS

Cadtech, a Moroccan software development firm and new AmCham member, has signed a partnership agreement with Silicon Valley company Panonica for the development of new IT applications in Morocco. Cadtech has already developed geographic information system (GIS) products such as Syger and Sygerweb/Xmap, and new applications produced for Panonica will be exported around the world.

Caisse de Dépôt et de Gestion (CDG), an AmCham member, has launched a DH 300 million venture capital fund in partnership with CDP Capital, the fund management subsidiary of Caisse de Dépôt et de Placement du Québec. The fund, Accès Capital Atlantique, will invest in small-and-medium-sized businesses with strong potential for growth.

Choice Hotels, a U.S. hotel group, is spending DH 3 million on the renovation of a downtown Casablanca hotel which will target business visitors under the three-star Comfort Suites brand. The group's future projects include a 120-room four-star hotel

at Casablanca's Mohammed V Airport, a 150-room four-star establishment in Agadir, and a 120-room four-star location in Marrakech.

Hewlett Packard and **Microsoft** (both AmCham members) were named Best Service Companies and were awarded the Sitexpo trophy during the 11th edition of the fair.

SAMIR, an AmCham member, has appointed Youssef Zerrad as its Communication Director as part of an organizational restructuring to be unveiled shortly by the oil refinery.

Tiffany and Co., a U.S. franchise specialized in jewelry and luxury gifts, has opened a store in Casablanca. The Moroccan franchise holders have invested \$2 million in the Casablanca store and plan additional outlets in Rabat and Marrakech. Tiffany and Co. has more than 100 stores in 60 countries around the world. The Casablanca store is located at 3, rue Abderrazak (Tel: 022 94 92 94).

Walsman & Associates, an AmCham member and a Lotus Business Partner in Morocco since 1996, recently attained the

level of IBM Premier Partner. Specializing in Lotus Notes, the company provides administration, system architecture design, application development, and training services to more than 30 multinationals and large Moroccan firms. It is the only company in North Africa to have achieved this highest level of IBM certification and partnership. Read about the company at www.ibm.com or visit the web site www.brooktrout.com.

NEW MEMBERS

CIOR (cement manufacturer):
Mr. Youssef Ennadifi

Fruit of the Loom (garments):
Mr. Abdelmalek El Ouassini

ONA (holding company):
Mr. Mourad Chérif

ONDA (airport management):
Mr. Mohamed Amal Guedira

Tractafic (construction equipment):
Mr. Mohamed Daffa